

Good evening, my name is Angel Fernandez-Chavero, a leader of St. Rose of Lima Church in New Haven and a member of Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut (CONECT). I speak in support of SB 68, SB 628, and HB 6037, giving access to all qualified residents of Connecticut a driver's license, regardless of immigration status.

When I recall the stories I have heard from my fellow parishioners about the obstacles they face to do what we all aspire to do – to contribute fully to the community in which we live, and then I recall the well-documented challenges Connecticut faces today and in the future with regard to our economic competitiveness, legislation like this makes all the sense in the world.

A good part of my career has been in economic development. As legislators, you too know our state faces global and internal forces that threaten to turn us into the equivalent of an economic cul-de-sac. A set of those forces is driven by population – whether it's various types of brain drains, a declining youth population or a graying one, and stagnant growth, if any. Yet we know the solutions – broadly stated – that can turn them around, and make our small state compete successfully way above its weight class. We must become the state with the best educational opportunities, from Pre-K to graduate school, the state that is the safest in the nation, and the state that is most welcoming to entrepreneurs.

The bills before you directly address 2 out of the 3. For public safety, they dramatically reduce the number of uninsured drivers and unregistered cars on our roads. They dramatically increase the number of people who can be immediately identified by police. Those alone bring direct economic benefits in reducing premiums by \$20 million, and increasing revenue to the state by \$5 million. Imagine the productivity we gain as well in reduced time spent by police and accident victims caused by uninsured drivers.

Now imagine the benefits we would get when we remove most of the obstacles confronting this category of indisputably hardworking and entrepreneurial people. Even now, according to the non-partisan Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, in 2010 undocumented families paid Connecticut about \$14 million in personal income taxes, \$31 million in property taxes and \$75 million in sales taxes. Imagine how much more that could be.

I believe that what spoke the most loudly to our fellow congregations in CONECT, urban and suburban, were three things: how the struggles of my fellow parishioners were a shame given that all they want to do is provide for their families and contribute to our community; how creating an artificially large unlicensed uninsured set of drivers harms us all; and how this situation lacks common sense.

As a state, we have a collective responsibility to do the best we can with the hand we are dealt with. Connecticut did not ask for nor create a federal policy that excludes an entire class of people. But they are here now, and until federal policy is fixed, we in Connecticut should do whatever it takes, within the law, to allow every one of its residents to contribute to her and his full potential. Helping to unleash much of the potential of an entire category of entrepreneurial people would go a long way to ensuring Connecticut's future as a world-class economic competitor. And it would be in keeping with our finest moments as a people of compassion and justice.